

# Maurice Hinchey NEWS

22nd CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT, NEW YORK

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## **HINCHEY AND COLLEAGUES ACT TO PROTECT ROADLESS AREAS**

WASHINGTON - U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey (NY-22) today joined colleagues at a press conference to announce the reintroduction of the National Forest Roadless Area Conservation Act. The legislation would protect nearly sixty million acres of pristine National Forest lands from logging, mining, and drilling, except in cases where the logging is necessary to protect forest health, to improve habitat for endangered species or to reduce fire danger. The lands will remain open for recreational use including hunting, fishing, camping and hiking.

Hinchey made the following remarks:

"As a strong supporter of wild forests who was involved in the creation of the roadless policy, I'm here to support the reintroduction of this important bipartisan legislation to ensure that the policy remains in effect.

"Our constituents are demanding the protection of our remaining unroaded forests in order to preserve recreational opportunities and the critical environmental functions these intact forests provide. The Forest Service has failed to protect our forests in the public interest. Under their stewardship over 400,000 miles of logging roads have been built, while industrial activities have encroached on more than half of all National Forest lands. Only 18 percent of the 192-million acre National Forest System is currently afforded protection against destructive activities. The nation's leading scientists have repeatedly informed us that the unroaded portions of our national forests are not only the most important habitat for fish and wildlife, but are critical sources of clean drinking water for over 60 million Americans.

"After being reaffirmed by the 9th District U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in April, the Roadless Rule is the law of the land and the Bush Administration should be enforcing it. Yet despite earlier pledges to uphold the rule, the Bush Administration is intent on eviscerating this landmark conservation achievement for the benefit of special interests. Given the scientific basis for the policy and its popularity with the public, it's shameful but not surprising that the Bush Administration has consistently worked to weaken and undermine it.

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**Congressman Maurice Hinchey**

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"Nowhere is the need for the protection of roadless forests more apparent than in the Tongass and Chugach National Forests in Alaska. This administration is so eager to log in Alaska that they've already scheduled 50 timber sales in roadless areas in the Tongass. The Tongass is our largest national forest and without protection it is where 50 percent of all roadless area logging and road building is expected to occur in the next four years. The only thing holding back the chainsaws in Alaska is the Roadless Rule.

"That's why we're here on a bipartisan basis in support of preserving the roadless rule, because we cannot afford to keep losing our last publicly owned wild forests in Alaska or anywhere else. The roadless policy is one of the most significant national forest conservation measures of the last 100 years and should be preserved in its current form as an enduring legacy of true forest protection."